

CHINQUAPIN SERVICE STATION  
AND LUNCHROOM (Building No.5050)  
(Yosemite National Park. Intersection  
of Glacier Point Road and State  
Highway 41.) *Wawona*  
Mariposa County  
California

HABS No. CA-2299

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of Interior  
San Francisco, California 94102

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**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**  
**CHINQUAPIN SERVICE STATION AND LUNCHROOM**  
**(Building No. 5050)**

HABS No. CA-2299

*Wawona*  
**Location:** Yosemite National Park, Intersection of Glacier Point Road and State Highway 41, Mariposa County, California.

**UTM Reference:** 11 261060 4170050  
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**Significance:** The Chinquapin Service Station and Lunchroom was built in 1933 as part of an overall redesign of the Wawona/Glacier Point Road - State Highway 41 intersection. It is one of four buildings which comprise the Chinquapin Historic District, the others being a public restroom to the southeast and a ranger residence and garage to the southwest. The buildings share a common design style and construction methodology unique to Yosemite and exemplify the National Park Service's interpretation of the rustic design ethic.

The following excerpt is taken from the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for the Chinquapin Historic District and serves to describe the building's regional significance.

The former Chinquapin administrative complex is considered regionally significant as exemplifying an architectural theme specifically developed by the National Park Service Branch of Plans and Designs in response to earlier building traditions in Yosemite National Park. It is a unique style unused in other parks and is exemplified by only a few buildings in Yosemite. The four buildings at Chinquapin included in this nomination comprise a small historic district exemplifying one aspect of the Park Service's interpretation of the rustic design ethic, specifically, one stressing harmony with the cultural environment rather than the natural setting. The complex is associated with the historic context "Rustic Architecture in Yosemite, 1904-1940"....

Wosky [the landscape architect with the Engineering Department of Yosemite National Park at the time plans and designs were being executed for the Chinquapin complex] had earlier realized the impossibility of developing a single architectural theme appropriate to Yosemite because of the wide variety of environments, the distances between developed areas, and the stylistic disparity of existing structures. Unfettered by stylistic restraints, therefore, Park Service designers developed a cultural theme unknown in other mountainous Western parks for the ranger, comfort, and service stations at the Chinquapin site.

The simple, white-painted frame buildings with gable roofs, wide porches, and lap siding were typical of the architectural style of many buildings in nineteenth-century California, particularly hotel structures. This white clapboard cottage form had its origins in the East, but became a generic form with regional variations as Anglos moved west. The earlier Sentinel and Wawona hotels, both major complexes in the park, displayed the same architectural characteristics, although on a somewhat grander scale. Because Chinquapin lay on the road between those two hotels (the Sentinel was not razed until 1938), it was considered an appropriate place to further emphasize that cultural theme and tie together the Yosemite Valley and Wawona areas.

The service station/lunchroom was featured in the three-volume study by Albert H. Good entitled *Park and Recreation Structures*, published in 1938. That study served as a training tool for park architects and landscape architects throughout the nation.... The study described the Chinquapin concession building (vol. II, p. 86) as follows:

In parks of vast size and along extended parkways, concessions to dispense gasoline are necessary. This one dispenses fuel for both man and motor and provides quarters for an attendant in a housing the admirably recaptures the simple character of early California architecture.

The significance of this complex was noted by Allan Temko, San Francisco Chronicle architecture critic, who stated in 1987 that the two service stations at Yosemite (one in Yosemite Valley, the other at Chinquapin) prepared in the office of Eldridge T. Spencer reveal the "forward movement" of a period when designers had more freedom to be imaginative when confronted by perplexing architectural problems. The buildings at Chinquapin, he said, are important because they were executed at a time when architects could still practice their "high calling" and were not yet "reduced to servitude to fast-buck promoters and pre-packaged structures"....

.... The service station, though lacking the physical integrity to stand alone as a National Register property, retains a portion of its functional integrity as employee housing. It has, however, lost its functional integrity as a gas station. Although its architectural integrity is not pristine, it retains several of its character-defining elements and completes the picture of the design scheme and physical layout of the site....

**Description:** The Service Station and Lunchroom is a simple, single story structure with a roughly cross-shaped plan. A long south wing with the main living space is bisected at the northern end by a bedroom, bath, and kitchen facilities. At the very north is another bedroom with a garage and bedroom to the east. A porch wraps the south wing on three sides. The entire building has approximately 1,830 square feet of enclosed space, with an additional 725 square feet of covered porch area.

Exterior building materials are primarily wood, stone, and concrete. The foundation is stone except beneath the addition at the north end of the building where it is concrete. The

walls are constructed of wood studs faced primarily with 1 in. x 12 in. horizontal, V-groove lap siding, though smooth plywood faces the short wall just to the north of the kitchen. The roof consists of 2 in. x 6 in. rafters with 1 in. x 6 in. sheathing and coarse wood shingles. At the eave, the rafter tails angle up and out from the wall plane and a single 1 in. x 8 in. soffit board with mitered edges covers them. The shed roof is clad primarily with wood shingles, though from the kitchen north along the east elevation to the end of the building, a layer of asphalt composition roll roofing has been applied over the shingles. A low wood railing encloses the porch, filling most bays except in front of entries.

The south wing is narrow in width with a long north/south axis and has a steeply sloping ( $\pm 12:12$ ) gable roof. This wing is wrapped by a porch on the west, south, and east sides. It is covered by a shed roof with a shallow slope ( $\pm 3:12$ ). This shed roof is supported by an exposed post and beam structural system.

At the cross in plan, the bedroom (former Service Station Office), bath, and kitchen spaces have a gable roof extending approximately two feet higher at the ridge than the central gable roof. The ridge is offset to the west. Originally, a shed roof extended west from the bedroom out over the gas pumps, however, this appendage has since been removed. Its connection to the main roof is still visible, however, as a line between different types of roof shingles.

To the north and east are two bedrooms and a garage. The bedroom to the north is covered by a gable roof with the identical slope ( $\pm 12:12$ ) as the main gable, the bedroom (former employee dining room) to the east and the garage have a roof which is an extension of the shed roof over the porch with the same shallow slope.

The south wing of the building consists of a large living room with two small bathrooms at the south end. The living room was once used as the lunchroom, while the two small bathrooms were the public restrooms for the Service Station. The bathrooms have public restroom fixtures and accessories such as towel and soap dispensers still installed and functional. Entry to the rooms is gained through narrow wood paneled doors with transom windows, which open from the outside at the south elevation. In addition, the women's restroom has an entrance from the living room.

The living room is a long, narrow space approximately 16 feet wide by 33 feet long. A fireplace is located at the south end; it is constructed of stone, has a firebox at floor level, and a mantel approximately 4 ft.-6 in. above the floor. It is flanked to the east by a door to a coat closet and to the west by a door to the women's restroom. Three pairs of French doors open onto the porch at the east and west. They are narrow, 10-lite glazed wood doors with hopper transom windows overhead. The French doors on the west wall are flanked on the exterior by two small, square tin and glass sconces with pyramidal tops containing a decorative, circular pattern of punched holes. A narrow, asymmetrical, double hung wood window graces the north end of the west wall. The window is 2 ft.-0 in. x 3 ft.-6 in. and has a 15 in. high, 2-lite upper sash and a 27 in. 4-lite lower sash. The finish

material of the interior wall in the living room is an alternating pattern of vertical 1 in. x 12 in. and 1 in. x 10 in. Ogee shaped, V-groove wood boards. The ceiling in the living room and restrooms is 1 in. x 6 in. smooth faced, painted wood boards and is approximately 10 ft.-0 in. high. Two ceiling mounted metal light fixtures, of a style similar to the exterior wall sconces, are located in the living room. The fixtures, which appear to have had globes at one time, currently have three bare bulbs and no globes, and a decorative punched pattern in the base.

Two interior doorways through the north wall of the living room open into the kitchen and the storeroom. The door into the storeroom is a double-acting door which swings both ways. The kitchen is cluttered now with an extra refrigerator, but otherwise appears to be largely original. Paneled wood cabinetry line two walls with a sink set into the counter below an east facing window. The window is an aluminum sliding unit and differs from the opening shown on the original plans by being divided into two windows rather than the original three. The countertop is green marbled Formica and the floors a similarly patterned green marbled linoleum. A range and refrigerator are free standing along the north wall and a water heater is installed in a nook in the northwest corner of the room.

The storeroom is accessible directly through a doorway from the kitchen as well as from the living room. The storeroom is paneled with unfinished, smooth wood planks and has 12 in. deep wood shelving extending from floor to ceiling on the south, west, and north walls. The ceiling in both the storeroom and kitchen is approximately 10 feet high, as in the living room, though a section of the kitchen ceiling has been lowered about 2 feet, apparently to house mechanical ducts.

Beyond the kitchen to the north is a small utility room. At the east side of the room is a door leading to a bedroom, formerly the employee dining room, and to the west is a door to another bedroom. The former employee dining room was constructed during the 1953 additions to the building. Although construction documents specified installation of kitchen equipment, countertops, and a water heater, these features and fixtures are not currently present, having either been removed or not installed in the first place. Some plumbing waste pipes remain, capped and unused. A solid core wood door with a chrome finish lockset and a sliding aluminum window have been installed in the east wall. The bedroom itself is a step down (12 inches) from the utility room and is at approximately ground level, presumably as was the garage which occupied the space prior to the 1953 remodeling.

The west door from the utility room leads into a bedroom with a 10 foot ceiling similar to the one in the living room. The interior is also finished in a similar manner to the living room. The bedroom has two window openings, one to the west with a single double hung wood window and one to the north with a pair of double hung wood windows. The windows are the same asymmetrical windows as in the living room. To the immediate south is a bathroom containing two shower stalls, a toilet, and a sink. The finish in the bathroom is wood paneling and a window opens from above the toilet back into the utility room to the east.

At the west end of the south wall of the bedroom a door leads to a landing with a closet opening off it to the east. Stairs lead down 4 steps to another landing in front of a 2 ft. - 0 in. wide transom door into another bedroom, formerly the Service Station Office. This landing contains a wood ladder on the south wall leading up into an attic space. The walls surrounding the steps and two landings have an unfinished wood surface similar to the adjacent bedroom.

The former Service Station Office is now used as a bedroom. The five windows on the north have been paneled over, presumably for privacy and security. A south facing window remains uncovered. All the windows are similar: 2 ft. - 0 in. x 7 ft. - 0 in. wood windows, 4 over 8 lite. The upper portion is an operating hopper-type window. Hinges protruding through the paneling on the interior indicate that the windows seem to be present inside the existing wall. Windows on the north wall are not covered on the outside, but the glazing has been painted over. An entrance door, a narrow wood unit has been padlocked from the inside. A steel framework, about 6 feet off the floor and extending about 30 inches out from the wall lines the north and south walls of the room. The framework appears to have held storage shelving when the room was used as part of the service station. The original shelving has been removed, and temporary shelving installed. At the northwest exterior corner of the room is a small electrical box containing pump motor switches and labeled "Bennett Ram Cat. 'B', John Wood Co."

At the north end of the building is a garage accessible only from the outside through two large hinged doors. The garage appears to have a floor level at grade and a concrete floor, however the space was locked at the time of the survey and was not entered by the survey team. Along the east wall of the garage and accessible only from the outside through 4 ft. - 6 in. openings are shallow storage closets, apparently used for storing fuel, though they were also locked at the time of the survey and their contents were not observed.

The building is heated by gas space heaters installed recently in the walls of several rooms. The heaters ventilate directly through the wall and the hoods are conspicuously visible on the exterior walls.

### History:

The following excerpt is taken from the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form and serves to describe the building's history from the time of its construction in late 1933 to July 1988, the date the Form was prepared. A site plan and reproductions of the construction documents are included as part of the National Register Registration Form.

By October 1932, a plaza area at Chinquapin was under construction in connection with improvement of the Glacier Point road.... Located at the junction of the Glacier Point and Wawona roads, Chinquapin seemed a good place to disseminate information to the public and to house rangers patrolling the southern portion of the park boundary, especially during deer hunting season. Completion of the Wawona road in 1933 was

expected to increase travel as would improvement of the road to Glacier Point. Park officials decided, therefore, to install a complete administrative unit at the Chinquapin junction, and the National Park Service Branch of Plans and Design prepared a construction scheme consisting of a ranger station, comfort station, and a Standard Oil Company service station with a small refreshment stand. The plan included landscaping around the plaza area connecting the Glacier Point and Wawona roads.

In March 1933 tracings of a proposed lunchroom and service station at Chinquapin were submitted by the Yosemite Park and Curry Company to Yosemite Superintendent C.G. Thomsom for his approval.... San Francisco architect Eldridge T. Spencer designed the building for the Curry Company to harmonize with the NPS design plan.

In July 1933 the Public Works Administration allotments contained funds to develop facilities at Chinquapin. These PWA projects were executed under the supervision and direction of the Engineering Department of Yosemite National Park....

The structure was completed at the end of 1933. It remained in business until 1976, after which time the two rows of gasoline pumps and the overhanging roof shelter were removed. After alterations, the the structure began serving as employee housing for the owners, the Yosemite Park and Curry Company. In 1987 the company donated the building to the National Park Service, but retained the right to house employees there pending a decision by the Park Service on its future.

The service station portion of Building #5050 has been altered in many ways from its original appearance. The long shed-type roof overhang and pumps were removed after 1979. The roof overhang had been anchored to the northwest side of the building above a small office enclosed within large 18-lite windows. After the roof overhang was removed, the panes were also taken out and the office area enclosed with screens instead. Most recently the screens have been removed and the previous service station office area enclosed with wood siding, further altering the historic facade of that northern part of the building.

The removal of the overhang altered the slope of the remaining portion of the station roof. In addition, the replacement roof section is not shingled and thus not in harmony with the rest of the structure. An addition on the back of the service station has plywood sheets as an exterior wall. Although painted white, the plywood clashes with the siding on the rest of the structure. Some windows have been replaced with aluminum frames. Interior walls have been cut to convert space into sleeping rooms. The porch around the old lunchroom portion of the structure suffers from dry rot, as do the uprights. The roof is also in poor condition, with some shakes missing. Both interior and exterior walls show water damage.

The modifications to the building noted above in the National Register Registration Form were apparent during a site inspection conducted on June 3-4, 1991. At the north end of the building approximately 12 feet was added to the garage as evidenced by a cast concrete

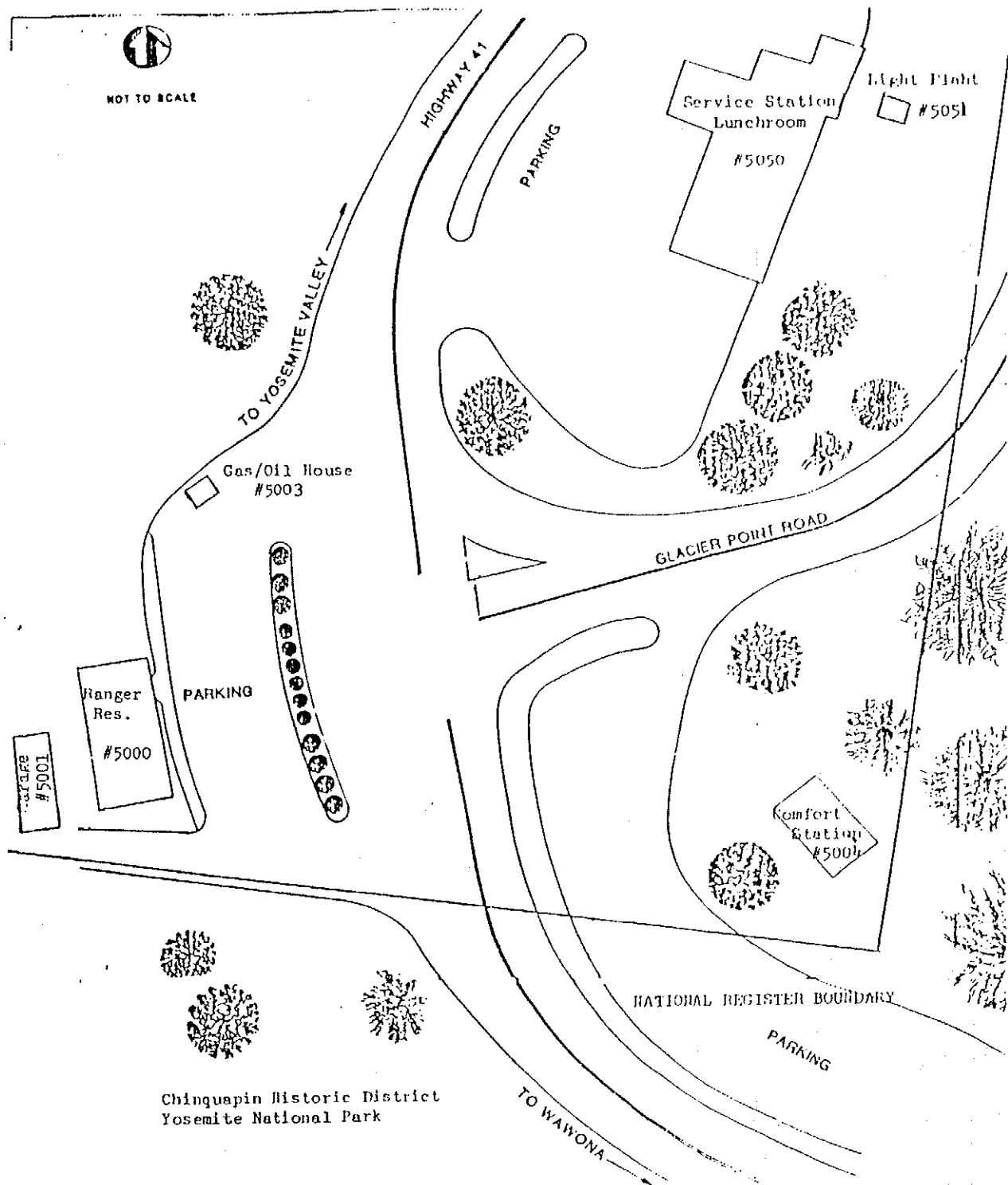
foundation differing from the surrounding stone. Dated drawings indicate that this addition was made sometime after 1953 and that the purpose was to create an employee dining area in what had been the garage. On the east elevation a section of wall, faced with smooth plywood, has been added just north of the kitchen and a small sliding aluminum window installed in it. The wall encloses a small inset in the facade and was apparently intended to create a passage between the employee dining area and the kitchen. Also on the east elevation, a small enclosure has been added on the porch under the shed roof to house a shower and sink. The siding matches the existing, but an offset from the original wall distinguishes the addition from original fabric.

A comparison of existing conditions with original drawings shows that there may have been a modification to the entrance of the restroom at the center of the building. The original plan drawings show a straight wall running east to west with a door into the bathroom from the east. What currently exists is a small inset into the corner of the bathroom where a door opens into the bedroom just to the north. The only door into the restroom is from the bedroom. Construction detailing and materials which match that in the surrounding rooms suggesting that this modification may have been a change made during the building's construction, rather than afterward.

**Sources:** National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for the Chinquapin Historic District (Ranger Station, Bldg. #5000; garage, Bldg. #5001; Comfort Station, Bldg. #5004; Service Station/Lunchroom, Bldg. 5050). Prepared by Linda W. Greene, Historian, National Park Service, Denver Service Center. 5 July 1988.

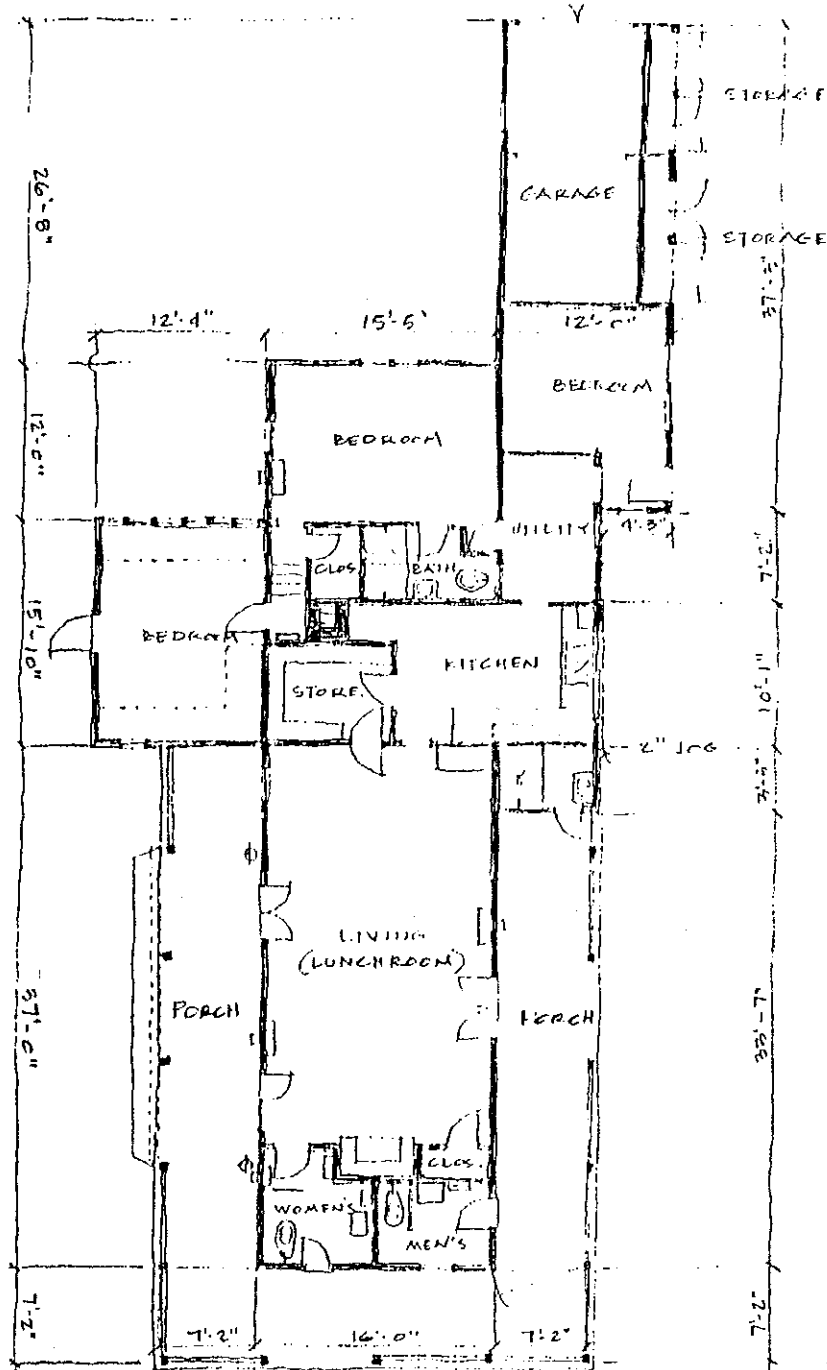
**Historian:** Architectural Resources Group, San Francisco, California. 24 July 1991.  
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CHINQUAPIN SERVICE STATION AND LUNCHROOM (Building No. 5050)  
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REFERENCE



**ARCHITECTURAL  
RESOURCES  
GROUP**

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SHEET TITLE

SKETCH PLAN

PROJECT TITLE

CHINQUAPIN HABS

SCALE  
N.T.S.

DATE  
7-91

PROJECT NO.

91030

SHEET NO.